

## COUNCIL WORK SESSION SEPTEMBER 11, 2012

The work session of the Council of the Town of Altavista was held in the Conference Room of the Municipal Building, 510 Seventh Street, on September 11, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.

### Council members

present: Mr. J.R. Burgess  
Mr. Ronald Coleman  
Mrs. Beverley Dalton  
Mr. Charles Edwards  
Mr. Bill Ferguson  
Mr. Michael Mattox

### Council members

absent: Mr. Jay Higginbotham

Also present: Mr. J. Waverly Coggsdale, III, Town Manager  
Mr. Dan Witt, Assistant Town Manager  
Mrs. Tobie Shelton, Finance Director  
Mrs. Mary Hall, Administration  
Ms. Jo Kelley, AEDA Administration  
Mr. Morgan Allen

Mayor Burgess called the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Mayor Burgess advised the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the peer analysis study Mr. Edwards had asked be considered. Mayor Burgess asked if Council moved forward with the analysis, what Council hoped to get from it.

Mr. Allen addressed Council stating he has talked with Mr. Edwards and Mr. Coggsdale and he plans to contact nine other towns along with Altavista obtaining a snapshot of their actual figures for Fiscal Year 2012. This would include comparing taxes, tax rates, looking at all the revenue figures and expenditures and recapping those to come up with this analysis.

Mayor Burgess asked if these localities will be in comparison to the size of Altavista.

Mr. Allen answered yes. He listed the towns that have agreed to participate.

Mayor Burgess asked if this will be compared to budgeted figures.

Mr. Allen stated he plans to compare actual dollars. This can be compared to the population of the Towns and can also breakdown and compare the departments to the Town's departments. He stated the idea is to compare how Altavista is stacked up with the other nine towns.

Mayor Burgess mentioned a lot of the Towns don't offer the services the Town of Altavista offers and asked what the advantage would be after this is completed.

Mr. Allen felt there would be areas in which Altavista looks quite well in and areas in which improvements could be made in. Once the reports are completed, discussions with a particular locality may be warranted to find out why one locality can operate cheaper than another.

Mr. Allen noted he was approached by Mr. Edwards to conduct this study and he is willing to assist with this project. He told Council if they move forward with this study they need to consider if they want to include CIP items or some CIP items and the debt service.

Mayor Burgess felt everything should be included.

Mr. Edwards suggested some of the CIP items be segregated such as the project on Main Street which would be irrelevant; vehicles would be relevant to other localities.

Mrs. Dalton stated the things that can be controlled are operational items and felt this would be the big thing to consider with the others being helpful information. Mrs. Dalton thanked Mr. Allen for his willingness to take on this project.

Mayor Burgess felt this information would be vital to the new Economic Development Director.

Mr. Edwards stated this would be an opportunity to see where we are doing better and where the town is not doing so well and can learn how to do it better.

Mr. Mattox stated there are so many different variables and these towns were selected according to population.

Mr. Allen answered the populations would be very similar.

Mr. Mattox related if Altavista is compared to Blackstone, Blackstone has a military base right beside of it. Is there a better way to line the town up with a community like the Town of Altavista; an industrial community, an old mill town? We need to get more correlated with what we are; otherwise, this study will look at towns that are so different from the Town of Altavista with different circumstances and we will not be able to relate them to us.

Mr. Allen stated he would not find another Altavista out there but felt there would be differences across the board. He mentioned that he did not care to select the localities but that staff come up with those and he would work with them.

Mrs. Dalton suggested that this might be the first of an oncoming project and to start where we start.

Mr. Mattox stated the point he was trying to get to was that this is a good thing to hold our head up and see what's going on in the rest of the world but it should not necessarily be a driving force for us to have dramatic change in Altavista; not unless it is an absolute that something horrible is being done.

Mr. Ferguson stated looking at the towns that were selected he could see similarities.

Mr. Edwards stated this peer analysis study came from a personal situation involving his business and had it not been for that experience his business would not have survived.

Mrs. Dalton felt Council would learn more from the differences than the similarities.

Mr. Coleman referred to meetings he has attended with Mayors and Vice-Mayors from other small towns; they did not have data but threw out challenges and opportunities. He stated there are a lot of challenges there that can be looked at. He stated they agreed that "we are who we are, each one of us" Altavista is Altavista and Blackstone is Blackstone but if there are challenges that can make you better than who you are and things that can be tailored to work in Altavista. He noted tourism is thriving in small towns; which may be a possibility to help increase revenue. Although the Mayors and Vice-Mayors did not want to get into a lot of detail, they did not have a lot of data. A lot of the representatives came from towns with dwindling textile industries but felt they would not die because of what they lost, but had to keep looking forward to thrive as a town. He stated you cannot be what somebody else is but what you can take pieces of what you learn to make you better.

Mrs. Dalton felt Council should take it a step higher and ask why the Town is No. 1 in a category or last in another category; she stated she would be looking for the because and whys in the Peer Analysis Study. She stated she was not sure she would be able to analyze the whys because of a relative position; a relative position will be helpful but to

the degree of going to another set of questions may mean going back to the selected localities.

Mr. Edwards felt there were other areas that need to be looked at as the population will not be the same and in reference to Police Protection this should be considered as “x” amount of dollars per resident per year and water should be considered as “x” amount of dollars spent producing 100,000 gallons of water.

Mr. Mattox stated this was not where he wanted Council to go. Example, Hurt and Gretna have a population of 1,200, one third of the Town of Altavista and have one police officer. The Town of Altavista is structured differently and located at the southern end of Campbell County and northern end of Pittsylvania County; one deputy north and south. He felt things such as number of restaurants, Wal-Mart, the traffic count coming through Altavista should be considered not the number of residents. He stated everything needs to be put into the perspective of Altavista and not what other communities are doing.

Mr. Coleman stated Council has to be willing to accept the negatives along with the positives; the negatives are the challenges.

Mayor Burgess asked Mr. Allen if there was any information he needed from Council.

Mr. Allen stated in his conversations with Mr. Coggsdale and Mr. Edwards, he has a general idea of what they would like to present in this package. The idea is to keep it simple and not to confuse it with a lot of scenarios.

Mr. Coggsdale mentioned this is Council’s opportunity to provide staff and Mr. Allen with their expectations.

Mayor Burgess thanked Mr. Allen for his willingness to work on the Peer Analysis Study.

It was the consensus of Council to work with Mr. Allen on the Peer Analysis study and to bring forth a motion at the regular town council meeting following the work session.

Mayor Burgess adjourned the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

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J.R. Burgess, Mayor

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J. Waverly Coggsdale, Clerk